

## **PROJECT DETAILS:**

### **1. Project Title:**

Initiatives for Married Adolescent Girls' Empowerment (IMAGE) in Bangalore Rural district of Karnataka through Research and Development.

### **2. Project Background:**

There are close to 15 million girls in India and around a million in Karnataka who are married off every year before the legal age (Indian Population Census, 2011). Despite the enactment of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, the practice of child marriages continues to be widespread in India. There are many reasons for girl child marriages, most of them being cultural, social and religious traditions and beliefs (NCPDR study). To address this issue in a comprehensive manner, it is important to prevent the young girls getting married before the age of 18 and also to empower Married Adolescent Girls, younger than 18 with necessary support services.

Terre des Hommes Netherlands ( Tdh NL) together with their NGO partners, has co-created & implementing "Initiatives for Married Adolescent Girls' Empowerment (IMAGE)" an innovative and integrated initiative to address the issues of Early Married Girls. Funded by TdH-NL, the project is being implemented in 5 districts - Bagalkot, Belgaum, Bidar, Chamarajanagar and Chikkaballapur. With the gained experiences, the proposal is to expand the same model with necessary adaptations to the local context to 15 districts of Karnataka to reach out to 15,000 such girls.

This means that there is a great need to study the impact and areas of project design needing improvement. In the given context, with financial support and research networking from Global Challenge Research Fund via Canterbury Christ Church University, a research consortium comprising Madras School of Social Work, Gonzaga College for Women and TdH-NL, undertook a study on Behaviour Change of Early Married Girls in the process of Empowerment in one of the IMAGE project areas. The aim was to understand their attitudes and behavioural change potential in terms of self-realising of their own wellbeing. The focus of the study was specific to capturing the current status of their health and hygiene, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, vocational skill development, and income generation activities and understanding the impact of the IMAGE project.

This study proved a need for further intervention through research and development in the project areas to enable an evidence-based process of redesigning / re-strategising the programme interventions while building on the key successes. A further objective of the project is to upscale to other states where TdH is active e.g. Jharkhand, Telengana and Odisha. This presents the need for deeper research into the current project so that the investments to be made in new project areas can be made judiciously as well as appropriately to the local context. Further data analysis may also be undertaken comparing the current data with data collected by TdH at the start of the IMAGE intervention.

### 3. Research input

The research focussed on the following five areas of project intervention:

1. Sexual and reproductive health and rights
2. Education
3. Health and Nutrition
4. Gender based violence
5. Social protection and entitlements

#### Location and sample

The location of the study was in Chamarajnagar district which is about 130 kms from Bangalore. The study covered both tribal and rural (non-tribal) villages. It was decided to take 80 respondents with 40 each from the rural and tribal locations. However, as the tribal hamlets and households were in remote locations and spread out geographically, the number of tribal Early married girls (EMGs) who could be reached for data collection was 23 and the remaining sample was 61 EMGs from rural areas, totalling to a sample of 84 EMGs within the research

#### Study design.

The study design included both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A detailed structured interview schedule was developed by Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) covering the five intervention domains. The schedule was pre-tested with 5 EMGs and corrected. FGD ( Focus group discussion) guidelines were developed for EMGs and spouses. Two FGDs were conducted with EMGs in rural area (in different villages) and three FGDs were conducted with EMGs in tribal area (in different villages). One FGD each was conducted with spouses of EMGs in the rural and tribal areas respectively. The details of the number of participants in each FGD are given below:

	Number of FGD Participants				
	Rural Area		Tribal Area		
	<i>Village 1</i>	<i>Village 2</i>	<i>Village 1</i>	<i>Village 2</i>	<i>Village 3</i>
EMGs	8	8	9	6	8
Spouses of EMGs	11	-	9	-	-

#### Data collection

The data was collected mid-January 2020 by students of Gonzaga College using a Kannada language version of the interview schedule, translated by TdH-NL. A data entry template was prepared in Excel format by MSSW and data entry was made by TdH-NL. Preliminary analysis was made by TdH-NL using Excel and presented in the follow-up Research Consortium meeting held at Chennai on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020. During the presentation we felt the need to explore the data a little more to identify patterns of association between variables. MSSW volunteered to do that and also produce the final report.

As it can be seen from the description, the study was truly done on a collaborative basis with all the partners contributing to its implementation with the facilitation support of Canterbury University and Secret Projects.

#### **4. Research Findings:**

On the overall benefit of the IMAGE program, the EMGs indicated the following in the FGDs.

- Now they understand their rights.
- Now they began to enjoy the freedom and getting livelihood benefits like tailoring and saree designing.
- They are getting more independence for decision making for themselves in the family.
- Greater sense of independence.
- Learnt to take independent decisions.

The word independence figures repeatedly in the statements made by the EMGs in the FGDs.

The spouses have the following to say regarding benefits:

- To give empowerment to our wives
- Helped each other
- Take care while she is pregnant and child rearing
- Learnt about their rights
- Learn more about health awareness
- Learned of risks of domestic abuse

While the spouses do not stress much on independence, they do say that they have understood the need to support their wives in their reproductive role and also to be supportive in general. This appears to be an important change in the spouses who generally are steeped in the patriarchal value system. The FGD participants feel that they have to continue in this direction they have been enabled to set and achieve the following:

- They want to go out and work
- Want more freedom
- More financial support from employment
- They want to come out and show their intelligence to others
- They need to develop their knowledge
- They need extra skill training programmes

The analysis of the data collected from the respondents has thrown up some key findings that reveal the impact of the IMAGE project and also identified gaps that need to be addressed.

#### **Summary of Main findings**

The study has brought out some of the stark facts of early marriage and has also managed to capture some key changes in the situation of these girls. The main findings are as follows.

(i) Age of respondents:

The age of the girls ranged from 15 to 19 at the time of the study. The average age was 17.2 years.

(ii) Education

- 10% of the girls have not gone to school, 8% have dropped out at primary level and 25% have gone up to the middle school level.
- 48% of the girls dropped out due to marriage.
- Girls in tribal locations appear to have dropped out more for reasons not associated with marriage.
- 3 girls attended school even after their marriage and 7 girls appeared for their board exams. A substantial percentage of girls (43%) wanted to complete their higher secondary level,
- Both husband and parents-in-law support the girls in their aspiration to study further.

(iii) Employment

- Majority of the girls were not in any gainful employment.
- The average income earned by the girls who were working was Rs.567/- per month.
- Majority (83%) of the husbands work as daily/weekly wage labourers. 57% of the Tribal households have income of 3000 and less while it is only 13% of the Rural households with the same income.
- 52% of the tribal community girls and 21% of the rural community girls did not avail the vocational training opportunity.
- 69% of the girls disagree with women working outside home, of which 38% strongly feel so.
- 88% of girls in the 18-19 age group do not favour working outside home, while it is 56% in the 15-17 age group.

(iv) Reproductive Health

- The age at marriage of the girls ranged from 11 years to 16 years. The average age at marriage was 13.9.
- The age at marriage of husbands ranged from a minimum of 17 to a maximum of 29 years with an average of 21.5 years
- The respondents desired an average age at marriage of 20 years for their daughters and 23.3 for their sons. (older than their own experience)
- 55% of girls who married between 11 to 13 years of age had 2 children while only 22% of those who married later had 2 children.
- At least 25% girls had given birth to their first child before reaching the age 16. 83% mentioned that their husbands will support any decision related to reproductive and child health taken by them.
- Over 57% have said that 20 or 21 years would be the appropriate age that supports healthy childbirth.
- Over 73.8% have suggested a 3-year gap between one child and the other.
- 32% of the respondents indicated that they had the right to postpone their pregnancy.

(v) Gender based Violence

- 32% faced violence occasionally and 2% frequently.
- Majority of the respondents have agreed to the statements describing the various attitudes justifying violence.

(vi) Entitlements

- More than 20% of the respondents have obtained Rations cards and Aadhaar cards in the last two-year period.
- A substantial percentage of respondents were helped to access welfare schemes by the project.

### 5.Next steps Needing Funding Support

The study has illuminated key aspects of the stark reality of early marriages and the deprivations that the early married girls face. It has also revealed that it is possible to make inroads into the issue with carefully planned interventions that bear fruits, some of which will be seen in the next generation. The study has opened up the possibility of collaborative researches through a network of researchers. A need for researching a larger sample size in a different geographic location (Chikkaballapur near Bangalore is suggested) to compare and further analyze tribal and periurban/urban demographics' engagement with the project. Furthermore, publication and dissemination of the study to organisations working in similar areas will be a useful tool to generate impact of the key learnings / program design.

#### Budget:

Serial No.	Particulars	Amount in Rupees
1.	Detailed Data Collection including in some inaccessible rural areas	210,000
2.	Analysis and Report Writing	1,000
3.	Liaison and coordination	70,000
4.	Publication and dissemination of research	80,000
	Administrative cost	46000
	Total Cost	506,000

### 6 Potential impact

1. Engage with key stakeholders including community leaders, early married girls, families and communities, Government and Civil Society Organisations into a consultative network that will enable dissemination of research study and sensitise the issues related to early child marriage.
2. Influence the policy makers and nodal agencies of the government, including health departments, anganwalli
3. Bring about collaborations with development organisations, NGOs, other entities that will participate in the development and support services of the target communities
4. Ensure further investments made by TdH-NL and other organisations towards early married girls will be judicious incorporating the research learnings and key resources.

5. Promote the upscale of IMAGE more widely by TDH incorporating the research studies including comparison of the current data with data collected earlier
6. Garner greater support for further scale of IMAGE with the research data presentation to donors